

Barway Scrapbook 1897 to 1990
Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers
summarised by
Mike Petty

Many of these stories were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014. They are supplemented by some selections 'From our Old Files' published in the Cambridge Independent Press and other notes.

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2016

1909 02 03

Fen Floods. After a week fraught with anxiety, and overshadowed by the darkest fears, the position in the Fen country is now easing. Yesterday a steady fall in the level of the water all round was reported. The watch on the banks of the rivers and lodes of Fenland however continues. Throughout the night 300 men patrolled between the 400 miles of the banks of the four rivers - the Great and Little Ouse, the Cam and the Lark. These patrols, equipped with field telephones, are part of the extensive flood prevention scheme which was organised by the Catchment Board following the floods two years ago. The scheme is now playing a vital part in defensive measures against another flood menace. The news of the gradual decrease in the level of the flood water has brought relief to scores of families, who had hurriedly to abandon their homes earlier this week. When the flood waters dropped nearly a foot in some parts on Wednesday, a number of families returned by boat to their homes and set about restoring order out of the chaos created by the water. At Barway, near Soham, where five families had hurriedly evacuated on Tuesday, there is now said to be no danger. Yesterday men were working at Barway building a dam to relieve the pressure of Water on the gates of the lode. Steel piles are being driven into the bed of the river.

1909 07 16

The news of the death of Charles Cole Ambrose of Barway was received at Ely with the deepest feelings of regret and quite a gloom was cast over Soham where he was particularly well-known. He was a son of Cole Ambrose of Stuntney the best-known agriculturalist in the Eastern Counties and reputed to be the largest wheat-grower in England. He will be greatly missed in the neighbourhood of Fordy Farm where he was regarded as a good master and a kind and genial gentleman. CWN 09 07 16

1910 01 14

An inquest was held after the body of a Witchford shepherd was discovered on the Barway railway sidings with both legs cut off. It would appear that two trains must have passed over the unfortunate man, the driver of the second one having seen the body when it was too late to stop. He was still alive when picked up but died shortly afterwards. A verdict of accidental death was returned. The swearing of the jury by the new form of oath, each man being sworn separately, was a somewhat lengthy process, occupying nearly ten minutes. CWN 10 01 14

1913 06 20

Soham fires on railway, Barway

1919 03 12

5,000 Acres Under Water. — In consequence of three serious breaks in the banks caused by the recent floods, it is estimated that about 5,000 acres of farm land, including some smallholdings, are still under water to a depth of from 2 ft. to 5.ft. in Cambridgeshire. In places the water stretches as far as the eye can see, cottages, farm buildings, stacks and just the top rails of gates showing out of the water. The breaks which occurred in the banks holding back the water resulted in large areas, hitherto regarded as safe from the inroads of flood water, becoming inundated. The damage has been most extensive and in some cases tons of produce, particularly potato crops, have been rendered almost valueless. The places where the banks gave way were (1) at Barway, on the Soham Lode, (2) at Waterbeach Fen, on the river Cam, (3) at Stretham and Thetford Fen, on the Old West River. The worst break was probably at Barway, where the bank apparently gave way from underneath, after being undermined by the water. Huge portions of the bank were torn away by the rush of water and can be seen now dotted about in the floods like little islands.

1924 11 05

Four R.A.F. men had an exciting experience in an aeroplane crash at Barway. The Vickers Vimy developed engine trouble and a landing was made in a stubble field. For a score of yards the aeroplane ran along the ground at the rate of nearly 80 mph and all would have been well had not a four-foot dyke barred the way. The machine crashed into the opposite side of the dyke, its nose penetrating the earth. The impact caused the 'plane to swerve completely round and almost turn a somersault. Fortunately it rebounded on a even keel and the airmen were able to alight, only one sustaining slight injuries

1928 07 13

The Henny Farm, near Ely, was offered for sale by auction. Described as 'one of the best farms in the Ely district' it has the advantage of being close to the Ely and Soham railway, adjoining Barway siding. It has an excellent house and homestead, five cottages, main water and a hard road through the farm. It was bought by auction in 1904 for £13,000 and a considerable sum has been spent on improvements. Seven years ago it would have made £20,000 at least. But the opening bid was £5,000 and it failed to reach the reserve price of £9,000 – under £20 an acre.

1937 02 18

An inquest heard that a bargeman's son had been in the habit of visiting the Half Acre pumping station at Barway. This had been erected in 1935 and contained a 10 horsepower crude oil engine. The engineer in charge said the lad had been standing with his back to the engine, looking out of the window. He was wearing a mackintosh which became caught in the flywheel. The man had run to stop the engine but the wheel took the boy round four or five times and his head hit the concrete. The flywheel had a projection for fixing a starting handle and this was not guarded. All other drainage engines were larger and let into the floor 37 02 16a.

1937 03 18

Threat to Barway following Lode burst – 37 03 18 & a

1937 06 17

The RDC scheme for the collection of unburnable rubbish attracted criticism. In the old parts of Burwell the lanes were very narrow and it was doubtful the lorry could get along. Some houses had been left and in others the receptacle had been taken as well. The parish had turned down a cheap scheme which worked well for a dear one that didn't. But Barway and the Fen had help to pay for collection in the past and would now be part of the scheme. The outskirts of Soham would be cleared and the dump shifted to a covered dump at Fordham. In the old area collections were made so casually that to call them collections was an absurdity. 37 06 17

1939 02 01

Men at Barway worked in mud and water through the night to strengthen the sluice gates which divide Soham Lode from the main river. One large barge loaded with clay was wedged in the mouth of the lode. But when the bank burst huge clods of earth weighing many hundredweights were blown out by the water. The edges of the gap are so sheer and straight that they might have been cut out by a gigantic knife. With the earth went sandbags and all manner of other material used to strengthen the bank. Tarpaulin sheets had been stretched over the top of the bank and held down by weighted sacks. Parts of these are now lying in the water swirling through the gap 39 02 01 & c

1939 02 02

Throughout the night 300 men patrolled between 3-400 miles of the banks of the Ouse, Cam and Lark. The patrols, equipped with field telephones, are part of the extensive flood prevention scheme organised following the floods of two years ago. News of the gradual decrease in the water level has brought relief to scores of families who had abandoned their

houses. A number have returned by boat to Barway and Soham and set about restoring order out of the chaos created by the water. 32 02 02b

1939 03 23

Presentation. — The Soham Station waiting room was the scene of a pleasing ceremony on Thursday week, when Mr. and Mrs. W. Ayres were presented with an armchair and a handbag respectively on the occasion of Mr. Ayres' retirement from the service of the L.N.E.R. The presentation was made by the Stationmaster (Mr. H. M. Parker). Mr. Ayres commenced service on the railway in 1898, and after a number of moves, went to Barway siding as signaller in 1909 and to Soham in 1912. He has thus completed 40 years' service, 29 of which were spent at Barway and Soham, during which time he has been under six stationmasters.

1954 06 03

Eastern Electricity says that more villages in the Ely area are to be connected to the public supply in the next six months. Already Mepal, Coveney, Pondersbridge and Ramsey Heights have been connected and Prickwillow, Barway and outlying parts of Haddenham and Littleport will follow. But it can only be economically justified if farmers recognise that electricity be used to the fullest extent as an aid to production and not just for lighting, radio and television. It increases their output and hastens the day when electricity can be made available throughout the whole of the countryside.

1955 10 14

A dispute over the use of a roadway alongside Barway parish church was settled in court. The owner of Pembroke Farm claimed his neighbour had nailed up a gate and cut a trench across a road that he used to drive his cattle to his land. It was agreed he could use one side of the road provided he erected a moveable hurdle fence to keep cattle away from the house. Almost all the inhabitants of the hamlet appeared on one side or other.55 10 14

1958 06 30

While hoeing sugar beet at New Fordy Farm, Barway, a farm worker came across two coins. He took them to his employer, Stanley Randall whose son, Philip, found a further six then decided to dig the land. Altogether 227 coins were discovered, two gold and the others silver. It is thought a pot containing them was broken while the land was being ploughed. It is not uncommon to find pieces of Roman pottery on the farm. 58 06 30

1958 10 13

Robert Barrick, a farm worker, was hoeing a field of sugar beet at Barway in June when he came across Roman coins. He handed them to Mr Ralph Randall who farmed the land and carried on working. Mr Randall and his brother later found a further 227 coins which he handed to the police. Mr Graham Pollard of the Fitzwilliam Museum dated them back to Mark Anthony and Nero and now a jury have declared them to be treasure-trove 58 10 13

1968 02 08

Guy Shropshire of Barway a major grower of fen celery, devises new pack – 68 02 08a

1972 11 23

Visitors to a new house at Barway, near Ely, may be asked to take a pew. After all, that's what people have been doing there for 600 years. The idea is to convert the village's tiny St Nicholas Church into a two or three-bedroomed house - a job that has been loosely described as a major alteration. St Nicholas, which has been unused for the last 10 years has been bought subject to planning permission to convert it into a house. If the deal goes through the new owner will inherit an unspecified number of skeletons - not in the cupboard but in the one-time graveyard outside

1982 09 18

Two redundant chapels are presently on the market. The Old Chapel on Barrington green has been converted into a modern open-plan home featuring an interior garden with fishpond and is priced at £90,000. By contrast St Nicholas at Barway costs £45,000. It dates back to the 14th century and retains many original features: the font stands in the hallway with the wooden pulpit in the lounge. 82 09 18a

1984 03 22

Churches, as the centre of worship and comfort in times of need were once held in high esteem. Today as religion increasingly takes a back seat their fate hangs in the balance. In Cambridgeshire alone there are 21 redundant churches. St Mary's in Benwick and St Mary Magdalene in March have been demolished while churches in Little Raveley, Little Ouse and Barway have been sold as homes and St Margaret's in Wyton is used as a games and recreation room 84 03 22 p19

1988 06 11

Barway church now a home – feature – 88 06 11a